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ExCom-M-11

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**NRP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of Meeting Held September 29, 1967**  
**Office of Deputy Secretary of Defense**  
**Room 3E 928, The Pentagon**  
**3:00 p. m. - 4:45 p. m.**

**Members Present**

Mr. Paul H. Nitze	Deputy Secretary of Defense
Mr. Richard Helms	Director of Central Intelligence
Dr. Donald F. Hornig	Special Assistant to the President for Science and Technology

**Others Present**

Dr. Alexander H. Flax	Director, National Reconnaissance Office, Member Ex Officio
Brig. Gen. Russell A. Berg	Acting Secretary, NRP Executive Committee

Dr. John S. Foster, Jr.  
Vice Adm. Rufus Taylor

DDR&E  
Deputy DCI  
CIA  
CIA  
PSAC Staff  
Assistant Director, BOB  
BOB  
DDR&E Staff  
NRO Comptroller  
NRO Staff  
Director, NRO Prog D

Mr. Carl E. Duckett  
Dr. Donald Steininger  
Mr. Fred S. Hoffman  
Mr. C. William Fischer  
Mr. Herbert Benington

Col. Paul Worthman  
Col. Clason Saunders

**NRO and USAF review(s)  
completed.**

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PAGE 1 OF 3 PAGES

**TOP SECRET**OX CART Phase-Out

Mr. Nitze stated that the purpose of this meeting was to review the status of the SR-71, to determine what problems may have arisen from SR-71 Category III Tests, and to recommend actions for the future on OXCART phasedown and SR-71 deployment.

Dr. Flax referred briefly to the papers he had distributed to the members, pointing out that they summarized about two-thirds of the information available from the SR-71 Category III Tests (which would be officially concluded about October 1, 1967). He stated that, in general, the SR-71 was in a satisfactory state and it was the judgment of operational experts that the Air Force could assume the North Viet Nam missions on December 1, 1967. This judgment was also reflected in a Joint Chiefs of Staff statement that the SR-71 is ready for operational employment.

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Dr. Hornig referred to the documents furnished to the ExCom and, in particular,



Dr. Hornig then compared the payload volumes of the aircraft and the photographic swath widths of their sensors. He believed the committee should not be too hasty in reaching a decision to deploy the SR-71.

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Dr. Flax stated that a simple comparison of sensor swath widths was not, in his view, a valid way to compare the mission coverage capabilities of the aircraft which might be assumed on this basis did not reflect mission requirements in any event, since complete area coverage of North Viet Nam was not being sought or achieved.

Mr. Nitze outlined the following options for consideration:  
(1) delay the transition from OXCART to the SR-71, (2) recommend a

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reversal of the December 1966 decision, or (3) adhere to that decision. The discussion turned to the first option. Asked the desirability of this option, Dr. Flax stated that if there were no economic restraints whatever he would prefer to retain the total force. However, economic constraints were very real and he believed a firm decision was called for at this time. A six-months' delay, in making the transition, he pointed out, could cost [redacted] A question was raised as to the cost of reclaiming OXCART aircraft from storage, if required. [redacted]

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[redacted] stated that this would involve approximately [redacted] if done within the first year. [redacted] also pointed out that the present financial plan provides some OXCART overlap by providing for continued operation [redacted] during December.

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Mr. Nitze observed that the additional [redacted] required for a delay in transition from the OXCART to the SR-71 was extremely critical in today's budgetary environment. Dr. Hornig favored a delay of six months. Dr. Foster agreed with the concept of delay but recommended a shorter period: somewhere between three and six months. Mr. Hoffman stated that the original decision of last December should be followed unchanged. Mr. Helms favored a delay. Dr. Flax agreed that a delay would provide a higher degree of confidence in assuring continued operational effectiveness in the face of possible improvement of North Viet Nameese defenses, which were just now beginning to be brought to bear on the OXCART aircraft. The cost of this insurance would of course be related to the length of delay in phase-out. He believed that the SR-71 deployment should not be held until the very last day of any agreed-to delay period; if a three-month delay were recommended, the SR-71 deployment should be scheduled for mid-February 1968.

Mr. Nitze asked for a memorandum spelling out (1) what the decision for a three-month delay would do for the program, (2) the associated costs, and (3) what is intended for the interim. Dr. Flax was asked to prepare such a paper. Mr. Nitze stated that he would confer with the Secretary of Defense on this matter early in the following week.

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Series C:

#1 - DDIA (working paper)

#2 - DD files

[redacted]  
 Russell H. Hornig  
 Brigadier General, USAF  
 Acting Secretary  
 NRP Executive Committee

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 PAGE 3 OF 3 PAGES